THE CAYAPA INDIANS*

by
Max Heimann

101 In the far north west of the Ecuadorian Republic there is a river
131 named the Santiago. Near the village of Borbon it is joined by
133 one of its tributaries, the Cayapa River. The Cayapa Indians, a
●161 harmless tribe consisting of no more than 2500 persons, live on the upper reaches of the Cayapa River and around its sources.

000 I have never been able to understand why they are called "uncivilized" and "savage." Would it be because they dress more simply, more comfortably, more suitably and cheaply than we European fashion slaves? Or would it be because they speak their own language, unknown to us, and because they do not know how to read and write and do not stuff their heads with the dead weight taught in schools and called "education"? Or even, would it be because they have other customs and manners as well as different moral concepts?

181 One thing is certain—the Cayapa are happy people, because they are more satisfied with their lot than we Europeans, who are so demanding and feel so superior with our conceit in our sham civilization, in the clothes prescribed for us by the tyrants of "fashion" and in the "wisdom" acquired in schools.

[439 They frequently come to town in small groups of five to 20
484] persons. I have seen them many hundreds of times, but again and
142 again I am delighted when I meet these small, but well-built and sturdy [282] figures. The men are not taller than 150-160 cm. (Translator--5 ft. to 5ft. 4 in.), while the women are barely 140 cm. (Translator--4 ft. 8 in.). Their skin is copper brown in color.

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114 * The author a business man, lived in Tumaco (southwest Colombia) for 35 years (1895-1930) and was German Vice-Consul for the Departamento Nariño from 1907 to 1920. Although he never actually visited Cayapa villages, he did have occasions to see and question groups of them "many hundreds of times," on their frequent visits to Tumaco. Apart from this, several of his employees have been in Cayapa villages and have given him reports. (K. Th. Preuss).

2: Murra E-4 (no date) 1943 SD6 Cayapa SD6

THE CAYAPA AND COLORADO

By JOHN MURRA

INTRODUCTION

The *Cayapa* and the *Colorado* are the last surviving Indian groups in the lush western lowlands of Ecuador (maps 1 and 6). Once an area of extensive Indian occupation, western Ecuador is now inhabited by a Spanish-speaking population of mixed Indian, Negro, and white ancestry, known as montuvios. The *Cayapa* and *Colorado* have precariously managed to hang on to their jungle homes. Speaking closely related if mutually unintelligible languages of the *Barbacoan* division of the *Chibchan* family, they represent the southernmost extension of that major division. Comparative studies with other *Chibchan*-speaking groups in Highland and eastern Colombia, with *Quechua*-speaking Indians in Highland Ecuador, and with various Montaña groups should prove of considerable culture-historical interest.

THE CAYAPA

The *Cayapa* are a riverain people inhabiting the lowlands of northwestern Ecuador. Sprinkled through the jungles of Esmeraldas Province, an area of difficult colonization and control, they managed for centuries to avoid the enslavement suffered by their Highland neighbors or the ethnic annihilation of most Coast aborigines. Only in the past few decades have their settlements been pushed back into the hills by Spanish-speaking montuvio and Negro homesteaders. World War II requirements in balsa wood, rubber, and other tropical commodities have accelerated this process of displacement and acculturation.

The Cayapa River and its affluents, from the mouth of the Anzole to the foot of the Andes, are the main area of *Cayapa* settlement. Barrett (1925) found three concentration spots: Punta Venado, Sapayo Grande, and San Miguel, corresponding to three political, tribal divisions, which might since have shifted or amalgamated. In addition, small groups of *Cayapa*, in various degrees of acculturation, are found in the Santiago Valley and along the coast into Colombia. Estimates of their numbers vary but hover around a mean of 2,000.

The chief source and authority on the *Cayapa* remains S. A. Barrett's monograph (1925). Barrett visited them in 1908–9, long enough to bring

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
SD6 Cayapa SD6

THE CAYAPA INDIANS OF ECUADOR

By S. A. Barrett

TERRITORY

Geographical Situation

[3]
[101]

THE people known as the Cayapa Indians live at present almost wholly on the main and tributary streams of the Rio Cayapas, one of the large rivers of the northwestern part of the Province of Esmeraldas, Ecuador, and about ninety miles in a direct line north of the equator. Their [484] territory is within comparatively easy reach of the ocean, which almost all visit at least once a year.

There are a few, perhaps an aggregate of one hundred individuals, who live in several other localities, namely, on the adjacent Rio Santiago, at Pueblo Viejo, and at points along the immediate coast from the Rio Dabele, a few miles south of the town of Esmeraldas, the capital of the province, northward to the Rio Rosario, about eight miles southeast of Tumaco, in the extreme southern- [161] western part of Colombia. However, practically all the Cayapa, approximating fifteen hundred to two thousand individuals, now live on or in the immediate vicinity of the river which bears their name.

133 The Rio Cayapas heads in the western slope of the coast range of the Andes at a point not far from Mt Cotacachi, which attains an altitude of 16,290 feet (4,966 meters). The western slope of this sierra is